

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

# GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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## Australia

**Post:** Canberra

### Winter crop harvest under way as rain continues in eastern Australia

**Report Categories:**

Agricultural Situation

Climate Change

Grain and Feed

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**Report Highlights:**

Above-average rainfall experienced in eastern Australia throughout CY 2010 has persisted into the crucial 2010/11 winter crop harvest period. According to official rainfall data for the month of November, key wheat production regions in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland received up to three times their monthly average rainfall. Eastern Australia appears to have finally broken the grip of the longest and most severe drought in recorded history. The wet conditions in eastern Australia remain in stark contrast to the onset of severe drought in the Western Australian wheat belt, which remains the only area of Australia in drought.

Above-average rainfall experienced in eastern Australia throughout CY 2010 has persisted into the crucial 2010/11 winter crop (wheat, barley and canola) harvest period and has confirmed previous suspicions of a wet harvest. Summer crop planting is complete for rice and cotton but will likely continue for sorghum given the ideal planting conditions.

According to official rainfall data for the month of November, key wheat production regions in Victoria, New South Wales and Queensland received up to three times their monthly average rainfall while key grain growing regions in South Australia received up to twice their monthly average. This follows similar conditions for the month of October.

Eastern Australia appears to have finally broken the grip of the longest and most severe drought in recorded history. The drought, which began in 2002/03, devastated countless crops and cut livestock numbers and dairy production. Widespread rainfall arrived on Christmas day 2009 and began a period of above-average rainfall which, on a monthly basis, has continued up until the time of writing this report. The wet conditions in eastern Australia remain in stark contrast to the onset of severe drought in the Western Australian wheat belt, which remains the only area of Australia in drought.

According to industry reports, the total Australian winter crop harvest (wheat, barley and canola) is about one quarter complete. Western Australia, where the drought continues, is around half complete. Queensland is also around half complete while NSW is approximately one third complete and Victoria is yet to start in earnest. Harvest progress is expected to be slow in all states (except Western Australia) for at least the next week while forecast rainfall persists.

Recent rainfall is not expected to change the production prospects for the 2010/11 winter cereal crop (barley and wheat). Improved prospects in eastern Australia have been effectively balanced by poorer prospects in Western Australia. Quality is expected to suffer in the east, particularly in the worst hit areas. Despite much publicity about the threat of locusts, this pest has not become a significant problem as yet. Cool weather and heavy rainfall seem to have delayed the emergence of locusts and may have at least partially abated them.

Summer crop production however, is expected to be boosted somewhat by recent rainfall which has arrived very early in the summer crop season. Rice and sorghum production (to be harvested in the 2011/12 crop year) are likely to benefit somewhat from recent rains while cotton production (to be harvested in the 2010/11 crop year) is expected to be boosted substantially. Post anticipates cotton industry production forecasts to be revised upwards significantly in the next few weeks.

Rainfall currently being experienced is forecast to continue for another week. The issue of above-average rainfall at harvest and diminished winter cereal crop quality seems likely to persist throughout the current 2010/11 winter crop harvest.

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<b>Title of Report</b>	<b>Date</b>
<a href="#">Australia Moves toward Phasing Out the Use of Sow Gestation Stalls</a>	11/24/10
<a href="#">Dairy and Products Annual 2010</a>	11/23/10